

REMARKS

A. 35 U.S.C. § 102

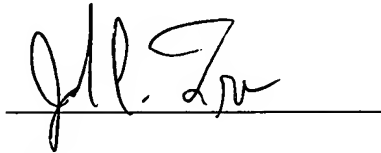
In the Office Action mailed on January 8, 2004, claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,601,307 to Meyer (hereinafter "Meyer"). Applicants are filing concurrently with the present response a certified translation of German Patent Application No. 101 02 957.8 from which the present application claims the benefit of the filing date of January 23, 2001 under 35 U.S.C. § 119. Accordingly, Applicants claim of the benefit of the filing date of January 23, 2001 has been perfected. Since claims 1-18 are supported by the disclosure of German Patent Application No. 101 02 957.8, they have an effective filing date of January 23, 2001. Since the effective filing date of January 23, 2001 is prior to the December 13, 2001 filing date of Mayer, Mayer does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e). Accordingly, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn. In addition the claims should be allowed.

CONCLUSION

In view of the arguments above, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims 1-18 are in condition for allowance and seek an early allowance thereof. If for any reason, the Examiner is unable to allow the application in the next Office Action and believes that an

interview would be helpful to resolve any remaining issues, she is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorneys at (312) 321-4200.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.C. Freeman", is written over a horizontal line.

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